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PRISON INDUSTRIES PROGRAM: A THUMBNAIL SKETCH

A Report Prepared for the Criminal Justice and Corrections Advisory Council

By Lois Menzies, Project Director
August 1988

The prison industries program at Montana State Prison consists of four programs: (1) industrial complex; (2) license plate factory; (3) ranch; and (4) vocational training. To participate in an industries program, an inmate must apply and interview for a vacant position. Participating inmates receive wages and may earn up to 13 days of good time each month. In fiscal year 1987, an average of 149 inmates participated in the prison industries program per month.

The following provides a brief description of each program, including information concerning the number of inmates employed, wages received, and funding sources.

INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Description. The industrial complex includes five operations: (1) printing; (2) upholstery; (3) furniture manufacturing and refinishing; (4) sign shop; and (5) wood products. Products are sold to state agencies through a competitive bidding process and to private customers through retail outlets.

Inmates employed/wages. The industrial complex employed an average of 38 inmates per month in fiscal year 1987. Inmate pay fluctuates; wages are based on six percent of the monthly sales and production level of the program.

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Program funding. The program is self-supporting and functions on a proprietary basis. Funds necessary to operate the program are generated from product sales.

LICENSE PLATE FACTORY

Description. The license plate factory, also known as the tag plant, manufactures all license plates for the state.

Inmates employed/wages. In fiscal year 1987, the factory employed an average of 15 inmates per month. An inmate may earn between 31 and 60 cents an hour depending on his position, skill level, and length of employment.

Program funding. The program is funded with motor vehicle state special revenues distributed through the Department of Justice.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Description. The vocational training program was authorized in 1982 during a special legislative session on prison issues. The program provides training in: (1) motor vehicle maintenance; (2) industrial arts; (3) horticulture; (4) meatcutting; (5) business skills; and (6) telemarketing. Products and services may be sold only to governmental agencies.

Inmates employed/wages. The program employed an average of 46 inmates a month in fiscal year 1987. Inmates, except those participating in horticultural training, earn between 31 and 60 cents an hour. Inmates in the horticultural program receive a base salary plus one to

two percent of monthly sales.

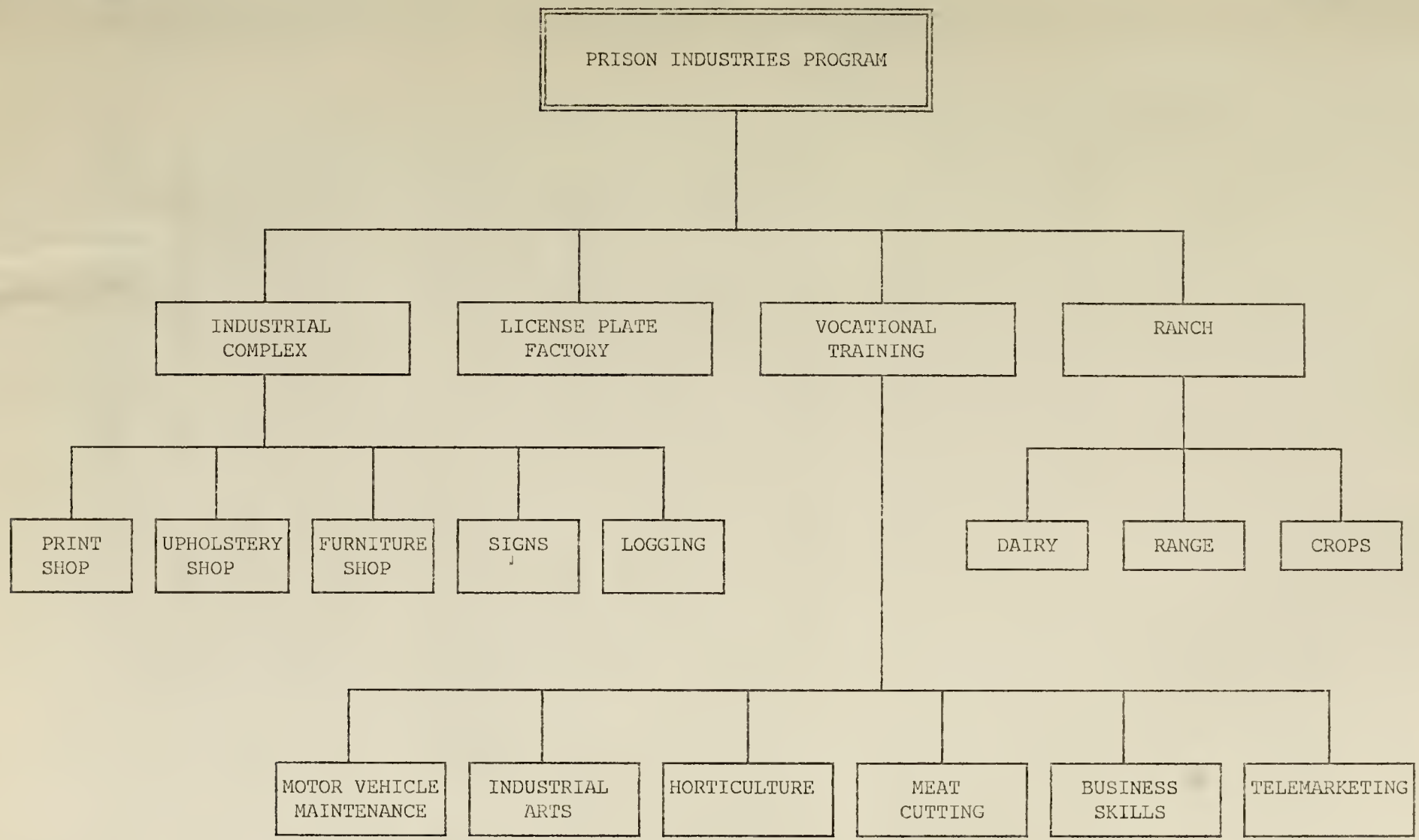
Program funding. The vocational training program is not self-supporting. Three sources of revenue fund the program: (1) the state general fund; (2) federal grant monies; and (3) a proprietary account.

RANCH

Description. The ranch program provides dairy products to state institutions and sells barley, feeder cattle, and surplus milk and cream on the open market.

Inmates employed/wages. In fiscal year 1987, an average of 50 inmates were employed each month. Inmates earn a daily wage ranging from $3.00 to $3.50.

Program funding. The program, which is self-supporting, functions on a proprietary basis. Funds necessary to operate the program are generated through product sales.


PRISON INDUSTRIES PROGRAM
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
LICENSE PLATE FACTORY
VOCATIONAL TRAINING
RANCH
PRINT SHOP
UPHOLSTERY SHOP
FURNITURE SHOP
SIGNS
LOGGING
DAIRY
RANGE
CROPS
MOTOR VEHICLE MAINTENANCE
INDUSTRIAL ARTS
HORTICULTURE
MEAT CUTTING
BUSINESS SKILLS
TELEMARKETING